



# Howard County Council

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Jon Weinstein  
Councilman  
District 1

December 12, 2017

Recently the debate on social media has focused on the location of High School #13 (HS#13) with Rockburn Branch Park as a potential site. The passion behind this debate has sometimes included inaccurate information. The flurry of posts on this issue show that Facebook is not the best place to have constructive discussions on matters with lots of details. BUT.... Here we are and I'm posting in the hopes that this information will be considered in the conversation, so I encourage you to read through the entirety of this long post.

Here are a few key points regarding HS#13.

1. Let me be start by stating that my position for years has been that the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) and the Board of Education (BOE) should seek out and investigate all potential viable Elkridge sites for HS#13 to achieve an opening as soon as feasible. I have also worked to allocate funds in the County budget to acquire land and expedite construction of the school.
2. Over my three years in office, and in the nearly two years before being elected that I knocked on doors in Elkridge, many people with children in the schools asked for a high school in Elkridge. Additionally, some members of the Greater Elkridge Community Association (GECA), including its former President have been lobbying for an Elkridge site, including Rockburn Branch Park, for years. As the elected representative for this area, I have been hearing from people advocating for different sites, including those for and against the Rockburn site.
3. This discussion of Elkridge locations has been a fairly regular topic at the public quarterly meetings conducted between the Council and the Board of Education and Superintendent during my time on the Council. At these meetings, my colleagues and I have requested HCPSS and the BOE to investigate sites in Elkridge and form a group of Elkridge residents to assist in this effort. These meetings were recorded and are available on the Council's website. Former Superintendent Foose refused to act on the request for a formal process, claiming there are no good sites in Elkridge without providing the data that was requested to support that claim. This wasted years of effective time to seek sites, leading us to the point HCPSS is today... a tight timeframe to find a site and go through the formal review and selection process to open a new high school for the 2022/23 school year.

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4. County Executive Kittleman signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to begin acquisition of the Mission Road site in May 2016; this site has not been purchased yet and will not be until HCPSS confirms to the administration it wants to move forward with that site.
5. Members of the Elkridge community organized a walking tour of the potential site at Rockburn Branch Park with members of the BOE, Councilman Ball, members of my staff, and interested residents on July 11th, 2017. Around this time, support for a Rockburn Park site grew among BOE members.
6. During the July 17, 2017 quarterly meeting between the BOE and Council, Interim Superintendent Martirano, in his first meeting with the Council as Superintendent, and our current BOE expressed interest in moving forward with our numerous requests for a more formal site review process.
7. The letter Councilmember Calvin Ball and I sent to the Superintendent in August 2017 formalized the multiple discussions at public meetings between the BOE and the County Council to demonstrate a need for a school site in Elkridge and request action on seeking more Elkridge sites. The letter does not specifically recommend Rockburn Branch Park for the location of HS#13. The primary intent was to encourage HCPSS and the BOE to do their due diligence and develop recommendations for sites based on factual information (including such things as engineering and financial viability) and not any one person's or group's preference for a particular site.

Since that letter was sent, I have gone to Annapolis with the County Executive, Councilmember Terrasa and colleagues from our state delegation to request funds from the Governor, Comptroller and Treasurer for a new high school to achieve the 2022 opening.

So what's next...

- Like many of you, I am waiting on the results of the HCPSS and BOE's actions on a site for the new high school. At this time we do not know whether or not they still intend to move forward with the Mission Road site or seek another site, whether Rockburn Park or some other site they may have in mind.
- Once they have identified a site or sites, the BOE will have to go through a process, including public hearings, before voting as a body to move that request forward to the state for approval. Their process will vary depending on whether the site has to be purchased or if it is already owned by the County.
- If the BOE votes to approve Rockburn, the County Executive will have to decide whether or not he approves since it is County-owned land. If Executive Kittleman agrees with a Rockburn site request by the BOE, then he would have to submit legislation to the Council to approve the land transfer. In the case of Rockburn, the County Council's role

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would be toward the end if legislation is filed to transfer the land. The Council does not have any authority to direct HCPSS to take any specific action on school sites.

So if you want to share your thoughts on Rockburn Park or other potential sites in Elkridge, at the Mission Road site, or other sites in Eastern Howard County for HS#13, please be sure to contact the BOE [[boe@hcpss.org](mailto:boe@hcpss.org)] and the Superintendent at this time. I do recommend you "cc" the County Executive and Council as well. Thank you for your consideration of this information.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jon Weinstein', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jon Weinstein  
Councilman, District 1  
Howard County Council